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ABSTRACT

Because Mandarin Chinese is a language without much morphology in case, number, and gender; i.e., an uninflectional analytical language in which word order plays a decisive role in determining the semantics of a sentence; it seems inconvenient to investigate the language in the framework of relational grammar (RG); which depends heavily on case marking. However, the universality of RG lies in the fact that the grammatical relationship between sentence elements exists in every natural language. While exploitation of case markers provides an effective access to the problem, RG offers other options for a language underdeveloped in case marking. The few case markings in Mandarin Chinese, for direct and indirect objects, can be combined with other syntactic devices such as passivization in a preliminary investigation of some Mandarin Chinese phenomena within the RG framework. An analysis of Mandarin Chinese intransitive sentences illustrates this possibility. (Author/MSE)

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Some Advancement Phenomena in Mandarin Chinese: The Enlightenment from Relational Grammar

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Some Advancement Phenomena in Mandarin Chinese: the Enlightenment from Relational Grammar

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Mandarin Chinese is a language without much morphology in case, number, and gender--an uninflectional analytical language in which the word order plays a decisive role in determining the semantics of a sentence. As a result, it seems inconvenient to investigate this language in the framework of Relational Grammar (RG) which depends very much on case marking. Nevertheless, such an impression is one-sided. In reality, the universality of RG lies in the fact that the grammatical relations between elements of a sentence exist in every natural language. The problem we need to explore is how these relations could be revealed and studied. Among others, the exploitation of case marking obviously provides us with an effective access to the problem, but this does not mean that RG is inapplicable to a language with little case marking, such as Chinese. Underdeveloped as Mandarin Chinese is in case marking, it nevertheless has some case markers, for direct and indirect objects, like the DO marker ba and the IO marker gei. These, together with other syntactic devices--passivization, for example--give the necessary conditions for a preliminary investigation of some Mandarin Chinese phenomena in the RG framework. The following discussion of di-transitive sentences is an initial attempt in this direction.

I

The basic word order of a Mandarin di-transitive sentence is either subject+V+DO+IO, or subject+V+IO+DO, providing that the IO is preceded by the case marker gei as in (1):[1]

(1) a. Wo reng-le nei jian jifu gei ta.
I toss-PFV that CL coat to 3sg
I tossed that coat to him.

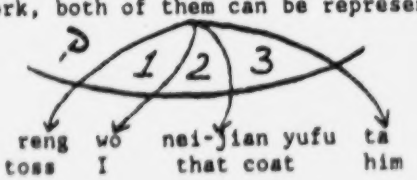
b. Wo reng-le gei ta nei jian jifu.
I tossed to him that coat.

In (1), the DO is nei jian jifu, 'that coat', and the IO is ta, 'him'. In contemporary Mandarin, a DO can optionally prepose before the verb with an accusative marker ba for some semantic and stylistic purposes:

(2) Wo ba nei jian jifu reng gei ta le.
I BA that CL coat toss to 3sg PFV
I tossed that coat to him.

Though there is an apparent surface difference in word order between (1) and (2), in the RG framework, both of them can be represented by the network in (3):

(3)



This means that the grammatical relationship between each NP in (1) and (2) is the same, regardless of surface order. In fact, for a certain group of verbs, the relative order of DO and IO after the verb is interchangeable, so that there could be either V+DO+IO or V+IO+DO, as we have just seen. This class of verbs, which we will call Class I, henceforth, requires gei before an indirect object. Observe the following sentences:

(4) a. Ta dai -le yi bao tang gei wo.
3sg bring PFV one CL candy to me
He brought a bag of candy to me.

b. Ta dai-le gei wo yi bao tang.

c. *Ta dai-le wo yi bao tang.

(5) a. Wo xie -le yi feng xin gei ta.
I write-PFV one CL letter to 3sg
I wrote a letter to him.

b. Wo xie -le gei ta yi feng xin

c. *Wo xie -le ta yi feng xin.

The ungrammaticality of (4c) and (5c) shows that gei is obligatory for the verbs of Class I. Other verbs of this class are given in (6):

(6)

di	to bring to	zu	to rent to
fen	to allocate	liu	to keep,to save
na	to take to	da	to telephone
ji	to mail		
jiao	to deliver	ti	to kick
mai	to sell	ban	to move
shu	to lose	tui	to push

There is another group of verbs which we will name Class II, which only require the optional use of gei before what is traditionally called an IO,as in:

(7) a. Ta huan -le yi ben shu gei ni.
3sg return PVF one CL book to you
He returned a book to you.

b. Ta huan-le gei ni yi ben shu.
He returned to you a book.

c. Ta huan-le ni yi ben shu.

(8) a. Wo fu -le liang bai kuai qian gei ta.
I pay-PFV two hundred dollar money to him.
I paid two hundred dollars to him.

b. Wo fu-le gei ta liang bai kuai qian.

c. Wo fu-le ta liang bai kuai qian.

Class II verbs includes the very commonly used ones listed in (9):

(9) song 'to give' pei 'to compensate'
jiao 'to teach' fu 'to pay'
shang 'to bestow' xu 'to promise to give'
jia 'to add on' jie 'to lend'

In addition, there is a third group of ditransitive verbs, Class III, which cannot take gei before a so-called 'indirect object'. This class differes from the first two classes in two ways: such verbs not only cannot have the particle gei but require the so-called 'indirect object' to precede the 'direct object'. Some of these verbs are given in (10):

(10) daying 'to promise' qingjiao 'to ask for enlightenment'
huida 'to answer' ying 'to win'
wen 'to ask' qiang 'to rob'
tou 'to steal' duo 'to snatch'

To illustrate the characteristics of these verbs, let us observe the sentences in (11) and (12):

(11) a. Wo wen -le ta yi ge wenti.
I ask PFV 3sg one CL question
I asked him a question.

b. *Wo wen -le yi ge wenti gei ta.
I asked a question to him.

c. *Wo wen -le gei ta yi ge wenti.
I asked to him a question.

(12) a. Ta pian -le wo yi zhi bi.
3sg cheat PFV me one CL pen
He cheated me out of (my) pen.

b. *Ta pian-le yi zhi bi gei wo.

c. *Ta pian-le gei wo yi zhi bi.

With respect to (11a) and (12a), the important question that should be raised is whether the so-called indirect object and direct object are really what they are believed to be. Actually, the same question should also be asked with regard to the verbs of Class II where gei is omitted for the indirect object that appears before the direct object, as in (7c) and (8c). In both of these situations, there is no case marking that can distinguish a direct object from an indirect object. Therefore, we have to resort to other kinds of evidence to prove the status or the status change, if there is any, of DO or IO. For this purpose, I propose two syntactic tests for the status of a direct object, or the the status of 2-hood, in the light of RG theory. First, only a direct object can be passivized. In Mandarin, the schema of a passive sentecne is roughly as follows:

(13) NP_1 bei - (NP_2) Verb
Direct Object Agent

The agent in parentheses means that the presence of it in a passive sentence is

optional; the important thing is that bei must be present. Consider:

(14) a. Tamen ban -le yi ba yizi gei wo.
3pl move PFV one CL chair to me
They moved a chair over to me.

b. Yi ba yizi bei (tamen) ban-le gei wo.
A chair was moved (by them) to me.

c. * Wo bei tamen ban -le yi ba yizi.
* I was moved by them a chair.

Verbs like ban 'to move' in (14) require the IO marker gei. This is the main reason why wo 'me' cannot be passivized. In comparison, as mentioned earlier, verbs of class II only require the optional presence of gei. For these verbs, the so-called 'indirect objects' can be passivized, though doing so sounds somewhat unusual because of the adverse meaning associated with the passivization construction in Chinese in general. (15) illustrates this point. (15c) is more or less like a description of an act in a bribery.

(15) a. Wo song -le yi ping jiu gei ta.
I send PFV one bottle wine to 3sg
I sent a bottle of wine to him.

b. Wo song -le ta yi ping jiu.
I sent him one bottle of wine.

c. Ta bei wo song -le yi ping jiu.
He was sent a bottle of wine by me.

d. * Yi ping jiu bei wo song-le ta.
one bottle wine BEI me send-PFV 3sg
One bottle of wine was sent him by me.

Consequently, it is reasanable to expect that for Class III verbs that forbid gei, the passivization of the so-called 'indirect object' should be perfectly natural. This is exactly the case. See (16):

(16) a. Wo qiang -le ta shi kuai qian.
I rob -PFV 3sg ten dollar money
I robbed him ten dollars.

b. Ta bei wo qiang-le shi kuai qian.
He was robbed of ten dollars by me.

c. *Shi kuai qian bei wo qiang -le ta.
* Ten dollars was robbed by me of him.

Is there any explanation why the schema for the passivization of (13) cannot hold for sentences like (15) and (16)? Logically, there can only be two possibilities: either (13) is wrong or the so-called 'indirect objects' are actually direct objects instead. We will return to this question after the description of the second test.

As mentioned earlier, direct objects can be preposed with an optional

direct object marker ba. In fact the ba construction is a useful diagnostic aid for distinguishing a direct object from an indirect object. Only the direct object but not the indirect object may be introduced by ba preverbally. Therefore, repeating the Class I sentence (4) as (17a), we would expect (17c), but not (17d), to be grammatical:

(17) a. Wo dai -le yi bao tang gei ta.
I bring PFV one CL candy to 3sg.
I brought a bag of candy to him.

b. Wo dai -le gei ta yi bao tang.
I brought to him a bag of candy.

c. Wo ba yi bao tang dai -le gei ta.
I BA one bag candy bring PFV to him
I brought a bag of candy to him.

d. * Wo ba ta dai -le yi bao tang.

For Class II verbs, whether or not the 'direct object' can appear in the ba construction depends on the presence of the gei of the indirect object. Without gei, the ba construction in the sentence will cause ungrammaticality:

(18) a. Wo fu -le (gei) ta liang kuai qian.
I pay -PFV to 3sg two dollar money.
I paid him two dollars.

b. Wo ba liang kuai qian fu -le gei ta.
I BA two dollar money pay-PFV to him

c. *Wo ba liang kuai qian fu-le ta.

d. *Wo ba ta fu-le liang kuai qian.

As to the verbs of Class II, we could then naturally expect that the ba constructiion of the traditionally called 'direct object' will be impossible, since the gei introducing the 'indirect object' is strictly forbidden:

(19) a. Wo qingjiao -le laoshi yi ge wenti.
I ask(for PFV teacher one CL question
enlightenment)
I respectfully asked the teacher one question.

b. * Wo ba yi ge wenti jingjiao -le laoshi.

However, the question that needs to be answered here is whether or not the 'indirect object' without gei can occur in the ba construction. The fact is that in such a situation, ba+'IO' will be ungrammatical, as in (20):

(20) a. Wo liu -le ni yi zhang piao.
I keep -PFV you one CL ticket
I kept one ticket for you.

b. * Wo ba ni liu -le yi zhang piao.

c. * Wo ba yi zhang piao liu-le ni.

We will soon find out, from an RG point of view, the explanation of why the structure of ba+gei-less 'IO' is bad.

So far we have seen that the behavior of non-gei indirect objects is quite irregular, if we still call them 'indirect objects' according to traditional Mandarin grammars. In passivization, these 'indirect objects' are like direct objects, whereas the original direct object cannot be passivized; as for the ba construction, non-gei 'indirect objects' cannot be introduced by ba, neither could a 'direct object' in the same sentence. In various Mandarin grammars known to me, there is no consistent syntactic account for these phenomena. The explanation given by Li and Thompson, for example, is in fact a semantic one. The presence of gei, they say, marks the indirect object as the goal of the transaction. They admit that there is at present no satisfactory syntactic answer to the quesiton of why Class I verbs obligatorily require gei, while Class II verbs may dispense with gei when the 'indirect object' precedes the 'direct object', and in addition, why gei is prohibited for Class III verbs. Similarly, no answer has been given for the obligatory precedence of an 'indirect object' without gei of the 'direct object.'[2] However, if we approach this problem of the strangely behaving 'indirect objects' from an RG point of view, we will find that the non-gei 'indirect objects' are not so irregular, and that a syntactic answer will be more appropriate to the puzzle we have here and could be more systematic.

II

One of the basic laws in Relational Grammar is the Chômeur law, formulated by Perlmutter and Postal as follows:[3]

(21) Chômeur Law
If an RN contains arcs of the form [$Term_x(a,b)\langle C_u C_k C_y\rangle$]
and [$Term_x(C,B)\ \langle C_{k+1} C_2\rangle$], then it contains an arc of the
form [$\hat{C}ho\ (a,b)\ \langle C_{k+1} C_w\rangle$].

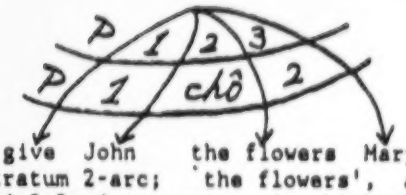
In other words, what (21) says is that when NP_i assumes the grammatical relation borne by another NP, NP_j ($i \neq j$), then NP_j ceases to bear any grammatical relation whatsoever. Such an NP_j is called a chomeur. Here are sentences illustrating chomeur phenomena:

(22) a. John gave the flowers to Mary.

b. John gave Mary the flowers.

Sentnece (22a) involves one stratum, in which 'John' heads a 1-arc, 'the flowers', a 2-arc, and 'Mary', a 3-arc. In comparison, (22b) has two strata that can be illustrated with the relational network represented in the stratal diagram in (23):

(23)

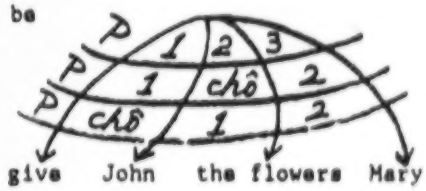


'Mary' thus heads a final stratum 2-arc; 'the flowers', a final chô-arc. Thus (23) involves the so-called 3-2 advancement, in which the indirect object 3 supplants the status of the direct object 2 and renders it into a chômeur. Consequently, 'the flowers' ceases to possess the characteristics of a 2. That is, a 2-cho can no longer be passivized:

(24) *The flowers were given Mary.

Diagrammatically, (24) should be

(25)



In fact (25) means that the initial 2 in the clause retreats to Chômeur and then advances to 1 in passivization. Nevertheless, this is a direct violation of the Chomeur Advancement Ban. Cf (26)

(26) Chômeurs cannot advance. That is if an RN contains an

arc of the form [Cho (a,b) $\langle C_x C_i \rangle$], then it contains no arc

no arc of the form [Term_y (a,b) $\langle C_{i+1} C_w \rangle$].

Now returning to the Chinese examples of Class II verbs, we can immediately see the same phenomena there. Consider (15), reproduced here as (27):

(27) a. Wo song -le yi ping jiu gei ta.
I send -PFV one bottle wine to 3sg
I sent a bottle of wine to him.

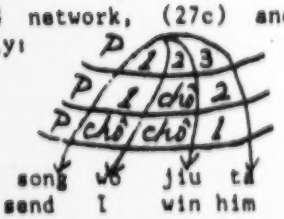
b. Wo song -le ta yi ping jiu.
I sent him one bottle of wine.

c. Ta bei wo song -le yi ping jiu.
He was sent a bottle of wine by me.

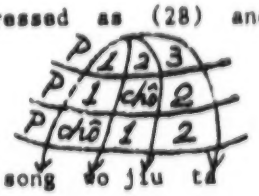
d. * Yi ping jiu bei wo song -le ta.
A bottle of wine was sent him by me.

In the RG network, (27c) and (27d) can be expressed as (28) and (29) respectively:

(28)



(29)



In (28), ta 'he' heads a 3-arc, a 2-arc, and a 1-arc in successive strata, and yi ping jiu 'a bottle of wine' and 'wo' are heads of final Chô-arcs. This structure conforms to the Stratal Uniqueness Law, which claims that no stratum can contain more than one 1-arc, one 2-arc or one 3-arc, but puts no such restriction on chomeurs or obliques. In addition, no Chô in (28) is advanced, so the sentence passes the Chômeur Advancement Ban. On the contrary in (29), yi ping jiu 'a bottle of wine', retreating from 2 to Cho and then advancing from Cho to 1, is inevitably bounced back by the Ban and hence the sentence is ungrammatical.

The situation with sentences of Class III verbs is more complicated because we do not have enough reason to say that there is a 3-2 Advancement as in (27b). Consider (30):

(30) a. Wo qiang -le ta shi kuai qian.
I rob -PFV 3sg ten dollar money
I robbed him of ten dollars.

b. *Wo qiang-le shi kuai qian gei ta.
I rob-PFV ten dollar money to him

c. Ta bei wo qiang le shi kuai qian.
He was robbed by me of ten dollars.

d. *Shi kuai qian bei wo qiang-le ta.
* Ten dollars was robbed of him by me.

What (30b) indicates is that there cannot be a 3 in the sentence. Therefore, the possibility of 3-2 Advancement cannot be proposed. Then what is the syntactic structure of (30b)? According to Li and Thompson, ta 'him' is the direct object of the verb qiang 'rob' and shi kuai qian 'ten dollars' functions as a quantity adverbial denoting the extent of the action of robbing.[4] However, they do not explain why shi kuai qian 'ten dollars' should be analysed as an adverbial. In this connection, RG again provides us with a well-grounded analysis. Examining data like (30a) from an Advancement point of view, we can clearly see that what is involved in that sentence is oblique-2 Advancement.[5]. Let us consider some similar sentences before reviewing (30):

(31) a. Wo qiang -le yinghang yi qian kuai qian.
I rob -PFV bank one thousand dollar money
I robbed the bank of one thousand dollars.

b. Wo cong yinghang qiang-le yi qian kuai qian.
I from bank rob-PFV one thousand dollar money
I robbed one thousand dollars from the bank.

(32) a. Wo wen -le ta yi ge wenti.
I ask-PFV 3sg one CL question
I asked him one question.

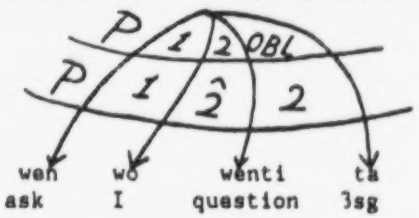
b. Wo xiang ta wen-le yi ge wenti.
I to him ask-PFV one CL question
To him I asked a question.

c. Ta bei wo wen -le yi ge wenti.

He was asked a question by me.

Cong yinghang 'from the bank' in (31b) and xiang ta 'to him' in (32b) are obliques. In Mandarin, obliques of active verbs are required to be preverbal. In an RG network, furthermore, (31a) and (32a) are the same. (32a) can be diagrammed as

(33)



Actually, (33) reveals the close relationship of the (a) and (b) sentences of (31) and (32). With such verbs as tou 'to steal', ying 'to win' and qiang 'to rob', a word nar (originally meaning 'there') must be added if the object in the OBL is a personal noun or pronoun. Cf (34):

(34) a. Wo tou -le ta yi ben shu.
I steal-PFV 3sg one CL book
I stole him one book.

b. Wo cong ta nar tou -le yi ben shu.
I from him NAR steal-PFV one CL book
I stole a book from him.

Nar in this case is semantically more like a suffix than a word. That is, the original menaing 'place' has been greatly reduced. Therefore, examples (28)-(31) show what we call in RG "Oblique-2 Advancement" in which a preverbal oblique becomes a postverbal direct object and renders the original direct object a Chô. This analysis automatically gives us a theoretical account for Li and Thompson's assertion that the second nominal after a Class III verb is not a direct object.

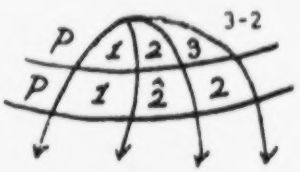
With the analysis of 3-2 Advancement and OBL-2 Advancement, we find that the traditionally regarded non-gei 'indirect objects' are in fact direct objects. Now, according to the second syntactic test we have just presented, a 2 should be able to be preposed with the ba construction. But as we have seen, some 2's cannot be used with ba, as in the following partial reproduction of (18)

(35) a. Wo fu -le (gei) ta liang kuai qian.
I pay -PFV to 3sg two dollar money
I paid him two dollars.

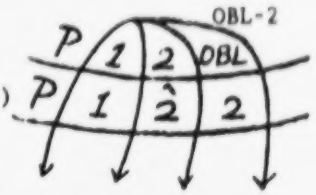
b. *Wo ba ta fu -le liang kuai qian.

Why can't such a 2 be used in the ba construction? An explanation must be given for this kind of phenomenon. For this purpose, we'd better re-examine the RG network of 3-2 Advancement and OBL-2 Advancement as well:

(36)



(37)



Diagrammatically, both 2's in (36) and (37) are non-initial. This fact gives us an important clue for imposing a restriction on the ba construction in Mandarin: only initial 2's can be used in the ba construction. This prediction can cover almost all the data of Class II and Class III verbs in this connection, except for two verbs, fa 'to fine' and pian 'to cheat', the examples of which are

(38) a. Jingcha fa -le wo shi kuai qian.
police fine-PFV me ten dollar money
The police fined me ten dollars.

b. Jingcha ba wo fa-le shi kuai qian.

(39) a. Ta pian -le ni yi zhang feiji piao
3sg cheat -PFV you one CL plane ticket
He cheated you out of a plane ticket.

b. ?Ta ba ni pian-le yi zhang feiji piao.

Hence, the restriction on the ba test of the 2-hood in Mandarin Chinese could be tentatively stated as follows:

(40) The direct object of di-transitive verbs other than fa (to fine) and pian (to cheat) cannot be used with the ba construction when the so-called indirect object is not preceded by gei.

Needless to say, this restriction is highly specific for Mandarin, since the appearence of ba does not alter the grammatical relations between the terms of a sentence. It only triggers the relative word order change on the surface. In comparison, that a 2, initial or non-initial, should be able to be passivized is predicted by the universal feature of passivization: namely, 2-1 Advancement. Anyhow, the restriction on the ba construction more or less accounts for the discrepancy of an initial 2 and a non-intial 2.

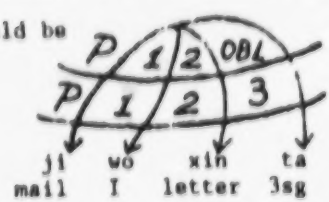
Another type of advancement that can be found with verbs of Class II and Class I is Benefactive-3 Advancement. As a matter of fact, most indirect objects in Mandarin are developed from the verb phrase gei 'to give'+ direct object. Later, this verb phrase became a prepositional phrase. When this phrase is used preverbally, it is a benefactive; when it occurs postverbally, it is an indirect object. Consider:

(41) a. Wo gei ta ji -le yi feng xin.
I for 3sg mail-PFV one CL letter
I mailed a letter for him.

b. Wo ji -le yi feng xin gei ta.
I mail-PFV one CL letter to 3sg
I mailed a letter to him.

The RG network for (41b) could be

(42)



In cases where the benefactive marker is different from the indirect object marker, it is easier to see the Advancement:

(43) a. Wo wei ta tiao -le yi jian yifu.
I for 3sg select-PFV one CL coat
I for him selected a coat.

b. Wo tiao -le yi jian yifu gei ta.
I select -PFV one CL coat to 3sg
I selected a coat for him.

The diagram for (43b) is similar to that (42).

Comparing Benefactive-3 Advancement with OBL-2 Advancement, we can see that these two different advancements are actually decided by different verbs: the former is associated with verbs of Class I and Class II; therefore there could be an indirect object marker gei indicating that the element advanced enters into 3-hood. The latter, on the other hand, is associated with Class III verbs, so that the advanced element can be further advanced in passivization, as in (32c). In this interaction of lexicon and syntax, the lexicon is more decisive.

In conclusion, with an RG approach we are now in a much better position to clarify the confusion concerning the object status of di-transitive verbs. With respect to the corresponding relations between gei and different classes of verbs with respect to advancements, we have

	gei	3-2	OBL-2	BEN-3
Class I	+	+	-	+
Class II	+	+	-	+
	-	-	+	-
Class III	-	-	+	-

The appearance of gei for di-transitive verbs is not merely a semantic question of transaction. It is more of a syntactially manipulated and manipulating phenonenon. On the one hand, after 3-2 Advancement, gei must be taken away. On the other hand, once a verb can be associated with gei, only BEN-3 rather than OBL-2 Advancement is possible in the sentence containing that verb.

Finally, we find that there are two different kinds of 2's in terms of the RG network. One is initial; the other is non-initial. Only the intial ones can be associated with the ba construction freely. As for the non-initial ones, they are generally not used that way.

All in all, the various correlations and characteristics we have found with objects of Madarin di-transitive verbs could not be revealed in the framework of either a descriptive grammar or a transformational grammar. Therefore, this is where Relational Grammar enlightens us.

Notes

1. In the following discussion, '...' is used to indicate what a grammatical term is traditioanlly called, such as 'indirect object'. In addition, PFV means perfectiv aspect (-le); CL denotes classifiers. Ba is the the direct object marker.
2. Charles N. Li and Sandra Thompson. Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar, Berkeley: University of California Press 1981, pp 383-384.
3. For some basic notions in Relational Grammar, refer to Studies in Relational Grammar, edited by David M. Perlmutter 1983.
4. Li and Thompson. Ibid p. 383.
5. More precisely this is Loc-2 Advancement. Furthermore, the Benefactive-3 Advancement we are going to discuss later can also be called OBL-3 Advancement. The use of OBL-2 Advancement means that it is open to other sub-categories of OBL's. Such a possibility needs further investigation.

References

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